

BREWSTER, WILLIAM

DUXBURY TERCENTENARY

1566

Bradford's History Of The Plymouth Plantation Relates In Full The Story Of The Pilgrims

Was Found In London And
Restored To Massachusetts

*Lilacs Planted By Brewster Still
Flourishing*

Brewster Moved To Duxbury And Cleared A New
Farm When He Was 64 Years Of Age.

It seems a pity that the chronicles of the early Duxbury settlers were so neglected. Among those who landed in the Mayflower were three men of education, well qualified to write, William Bradford, William Brewster and Edward Winslow.

One cannot be thankful enough for what Bradford wrote and that after many years his History of the Plymouth Plantation was found in the possession of the Bishop of London and through the efforts of certain public-spirited men was restored to the State of Massachusetts. But we would like a more detailed account of Brewster's every day life after he built his house at the Nook near his great friend Myles Standish who survived him by thirteen years. The view from the Brewster homestead site, while not as extensive or beautiful as that from where Standish built, is fair enough, overlooking the eminence on which later there was to be a monument to the doughty Captain. From this hill on clear days can be seen Provincetown where the Pilgrims landed after their tempestuous voyage across the Atlantic from Southampton.

Edward Winslow, a young Englishman of talent and education, was also competent to write and in fact did write accounts of the early days after the landing of the Mayflower in 1620.

William Brewster himself was educated at Oxford and after the Pilgrim band settled in Leyden taught the youth of that city English through the medium of the Latin tongue. He also wrote an English grammar and subsequently established himself as a printer and published theological books which could not be safely published in England.

For this he became a fugitive from justice and strange to say sought safety in London, the capital of the country trying to cause his arrest. There in the vast city he remained in obscurity until the sailing of the Mayflower.

Perhaps one should not be too critical of these early settlers for living more. Life was extremely hard with them and often they engaged in a life and death struggle for mere existence. Under such circumstances it was not to be wondered at that little except what was absolutely necessary was written.

It must be remembered that Elder Brewster was practically the minister in the infant Colony during the first nine years of its existence or till a minister was procured. As presiding Elder he preached twice each Sunday and unless he repeated his sermons, he must be credited with a considerable literary output. After the minister for the Colony was secured, Brewster felt free to follow his old friend Myles Standish and build a house on the Nook at Duxbury not far from the latter. At the time of this removal Brewster was sixty-four years old and that should assume at this age the labors of clearing his large tract reveals the courage of the man. For his acreage was considerable, extending from the homestead site across the low marshy land to what is now Standish Street almost up to where the path began leading to the grist mill at

Millbrook, or according to the old records, "we also allowe a wey through Sprague and Bassets Orchard to goe to Duxburrrough Towne."

Elder Brewster was far from being a strong man, evidently of a different muscular build from his friend Myles Standish. Yet it is recorded that he never shirked work of any kind. In that first terrible winter when only seven of the Pilgrim band remained well enough to care for the sick who were prostrated from exposure and lack of food, Brewster was one of the seven who according to Bradford "tended the sick with the utmost faithfulness and kindness and yet the Lord so upheld these persons that they were not at all infected."

No Portrait of Brewster

One cannot help wishing that a portrait of Brewster was extant. Of the four leading Pilgrims, Bradford, Brewster, Standish and Winslow, only the latter had had a portrait painted and that in England. It can readily be imagined that a portrait painter would have fared badly at his profession at the time the above mentioned pioneers were struggling for mere existence. And photography was in the distant future. While this explains the absence of likenesses it doesn't do away with the regret that they did not exist.

From 1632 to 1637 when Ralph Partridge was secured as minister for the First Church at Duxbury, Brewster repeated what he had done at Plymouth and acted as minister to the infant Church in the capacity of Presiding Elder. Bradford in his tribute to Brewster at the latter's death said: "He was wise and discreet and well spoken, having a grave but deliberate utterance; of a cheerful spirit, very sociable and pleasant, of a humble and modest mind, of a peaceful disposition, undervaluing himself and his own abilities and some times overvaluing others; inoffensive and innocent in life and conversation. None did more offend or displease him than such as would haughtily and proudly carry and lift up themselves, being risen from nothing and having little else in them to commend them but a few fine clothes or a little riches more than others. In teaching he was very moving and

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stirring of affections, also very plain and distinct. He had a singular good gift in prayer, in ripping up the heart and conscience before God. He always thought it were better for ministers to pray oftener and divide their prayers, than be long and tedious in the same, except upon solemn and special occasions, as in days of humiliation and the like."

Although it has been impossible to prove or disprove the truth of the tradition, the legend is quite widespread in Duxbury that the original slip of the lilacs on the Brewster homestead was brought over on the Mayflower by the Elder from Holland. If it be true that a lilac slip was brought over in 1620 by the Elder, is it not more likely that it was brought from England than Holland for the Elder had been living in the former country some months before he joined the Mayflower? But why say more as to where the lilacs came from or who brought them? There they are on the original Brewster homestead site, mute testimonials to the fact that the Elder cared for such things at a time when beauty, as such, was somewhat neglected in a severe struggle for existence. And there they bloom bravely year after year uncared for but flourishing, as much as to say to the present generation of Duxbury dwellers that they may have almost forgotten this grand old man who lived there but his old friends the lilacs have not.

The Elder died April 28, 1644, at the age of seventy-eight, universally mourned and was laid to rest on Burial Hill, Plymouth. Of a natural pacific nature some thing in his make up had compelled him to rebel against the established religious order when discreet silence would have brought him honors and competence. To attain his ideals he migrated to foreign soil in Holland and endured the hardships and privations of a tempestuous voyage across the Atlantic. While in make up he was a pacifist, he fought like a good soldier for what he considered right.

REUBEN PETERSON, M. D.

Governor Ames Had the Figures

When Governor Ames of Massachusetts, guest speaker of the Duxbury 250th Anniversary, gave his talk before the masses that were present on that day, he offered facts: "During the first twenty years after the Pilgrims landed, 21,000 men came to New England to establish here. Only seven million people spoke the English language when the Pilgrims landed, and not seventeen million spoke it at the commencement of the Revolution. Now it is the language of more than one hundred million people and seems eventually to become the universal tongue."

PLYMOUTH MAN, 86 ATTENDED DUXBURY CELEBRATION IN 1887

A familiar figure about Plymouth streets today, and for the last several years, in fact, is John Richmond, 86 years old.

"Old John," for that is the name given him by his Plymouth friends, hopes that some kind person will bring him to the Duxbury Tercenary celebration, for John is one of the few remaining persons in this town who enjoyed the celebration of 50 years ago when Duxbury had a big celebration in commemoration of its 250th anniversary.

John Richmond was then 36 years old. He had been engaged in trucking with his horse and team and looked ahead for many days, when he could join in Duxbury's fun and enjoyment. At first he planned to drive over the road with his horse, or rather that of his employer, for although John was a teamster in Plymouth for more than 50 years, he never owned a horse.

When John learned of the special excursion train from Plymouth, he changed his plans and on the day of the big celebration, he took the 7.20 a. m. train out of Plymouth, arrived in Duxbury and spent the entire day there, returning late at night, only to resume his toils the next day.

"But it was a great day and there was lot of fun," John told his Plymouth friends.

HISTORY ON HISTORY

An incident of the great dinner given the Governor of the Commonwealth when he visited Duxbury in 1887 was the fact that Governor Ames himself was seated in a chair owned at one time by Peregrine White and the Orator of the Day occupied one formerly owned by Priscilla Mullins.

Parking Space For Everyone

Misinformed automobilists, who do not live in Duxbury and who have been led to believe that parking space adjacent to Train field during the Duxbury celebration was only for town citizens are notified to the contrary.

There will be plenty of room for autos at any time and persons holding a ticket, to be purchased at a nominal fee, may go in and out of the parking area as they please.

The only difference with this plan for out of town people and the citizens of the town, is the fact that the latter group have the free parking.

Duxbury Parade Order

50 YEARS AGO

(June 17, 1887)

Chief Marshall; James Downey.

Aids: Samuel Atwell, Jr., James H. Killian, John H. Haverstock; George B. Wright.

Silver Fife and Drum Corps of Plymouth.

American Band of South Weymouth.

Collingwood Post, 76, G. A. R., of Plymouth, Comm. A. O. Brown.

His Excellency Governor Ames and guests in carriages.

Wm. Wadsworth Post 165, G. A. R., Duxbury, Comm. John W. Tower.

Martha Sever Post, 154, Kingston, Comm. George Owens.

Randolph Band.

Grand Canton Bunker Hill, I. O. O. F., of Charlestown.

Plymouth Band

Sagamore Encampment, No. 451, I. O. O. F., of Plymouth.

Adams Lodge, I. O. O. F., of Kingston.

Mattakeesett Lodge, 110.

Plymouth's John Richmond says that Buffum's Band of Boston played the music for the dance in the evening of the celebration in 1887.

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